

For Immediate Release

HELP IN THE INVESTIGATION OF CHILD ABUSE CASES

Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia to Deploy Telehealth Equipment Statewide for use in Medical Assessments

Atlanta, Georgia, January 10, 2011 - All children who are suspected victims of child abuse should have access to specialized medical evaluation and care. The Governor's Office for Children and Families recently awarded a grant to the Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia (CACGA) to ensure that Georgia communities have access to telehealth equipment to assist in medical assessments of child abuse cases.

Telehealth is a means of using technology to provide or support specialized medical evaluation and care at a distance. The concept of Telehealth is increasing nation-wide and offers many benefits, including:

- Increasing the availability of local medical experts to evaluate children alleged to have been abused
- Reducing the number of children who need to travel to a different location for medical evaluations
- Increasing the number of successful court actions by improving local expert court testimony
- Increasing second opinion and training opportunities for local health care providers

A specialized medical evaluation holds an important place in the multidisciplinary assessment of child abuse because it provides vital information to support or refute an allegation of abuse and helps to identify the health and welfare needs of vulnerable children. Additionally, since most children learn early in their lives the helping role of doctors and nurses, they may disclose information to medical personnel that they might not share with investigators.

Cynthia D. Howell, CEO of the Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia cites a two-fold goal in the deployment of the telehealth system. "First, we want to expand our medical capacity and expertise in child abuse assessment to more geographic areas in Georgia. Secondly, we want to expedite the evaluation of and reduce trauma to children by not transporting them long distances in order to receive proper medical evaluation and treatment."

Jennifer Bennecke, Executive Director for the Governor's Office for Children and Families stated, "We owe it to our communities to provide consistent, high-quality medical evaluation of children who are suspected victims of abuse and neglect."

26 of 39 Children's Advocacy Centers will be issued special equipment designed to allow the transmission of live child abuse assessments between hub and remote sites. The hub site for the Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia is currently the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Child Protection Center.

CACGA will launch the telehealth project with a summit of Georgia CAC medical providers on January 19, 2011 at the Medical Center of Central Georgia in Macon.

MORE

More than 2 million cases of child abuse and neglect are reported in the United States each year. Children's Advocacy Centers combine the wisdom and knowledge of specialized professionals to ensure an effective response is in place that meets the needs of vulnerable children and their families. This is done through a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) composed of highly qualified experts in all aspects of child protection services including medical professionals. CACGA currently consists of 39 Children's Advocacy Centers throughout the state of Georgia that serve more than 10,000 children a year in 146 counties.

The following 26 Children's Advocacy Centers will receive telehealth equipment:

Albany – The Firefly House	Fort Oglethorpe - CAC of Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit
Augusta – Child Enrichment, Inc.	Gainesville – Edmondson-Telford Center for Children
Athens – The Cottage	Hinesville – Helen's Haven
Blakely – Pataula Center for Children	Jonesboro – Rainbow House, Inc.
Brunswick – Golden Isles Children's Center	LaGrange – CAC of Troup County (Twin Cedars)
Cairo – Children's Advocacy Center of South Georgia	Moultrie – Hero House
Cartersville – A Better Way	Rome – Harbor House
Cordele – The Gateway Center	Royston – Harmony House
Cumming – Forsyth County CAC	Savannah – Coastal Children's Advocacy Center
Dalton – The GreenHouse	Valdosta – CAC of Lowndes County
Dublin – Stepping Stone	Warner Robins – Rainbow House Resource Center
Duluth – Gwinnett Sexual Assault Center and CAC	Waycross – Satilla Advocacy Services
Ellijay – Appalachian Children's Center	Winder – The Tree House

The remaining Children's Advocacy Centers already have access to the specialized equipment.

Contact:

Cynthia D Howell
Children's Advocacy Centers of Georgia
cacga@cacga.org
www.cacga.org
770-319-6888

XXXX